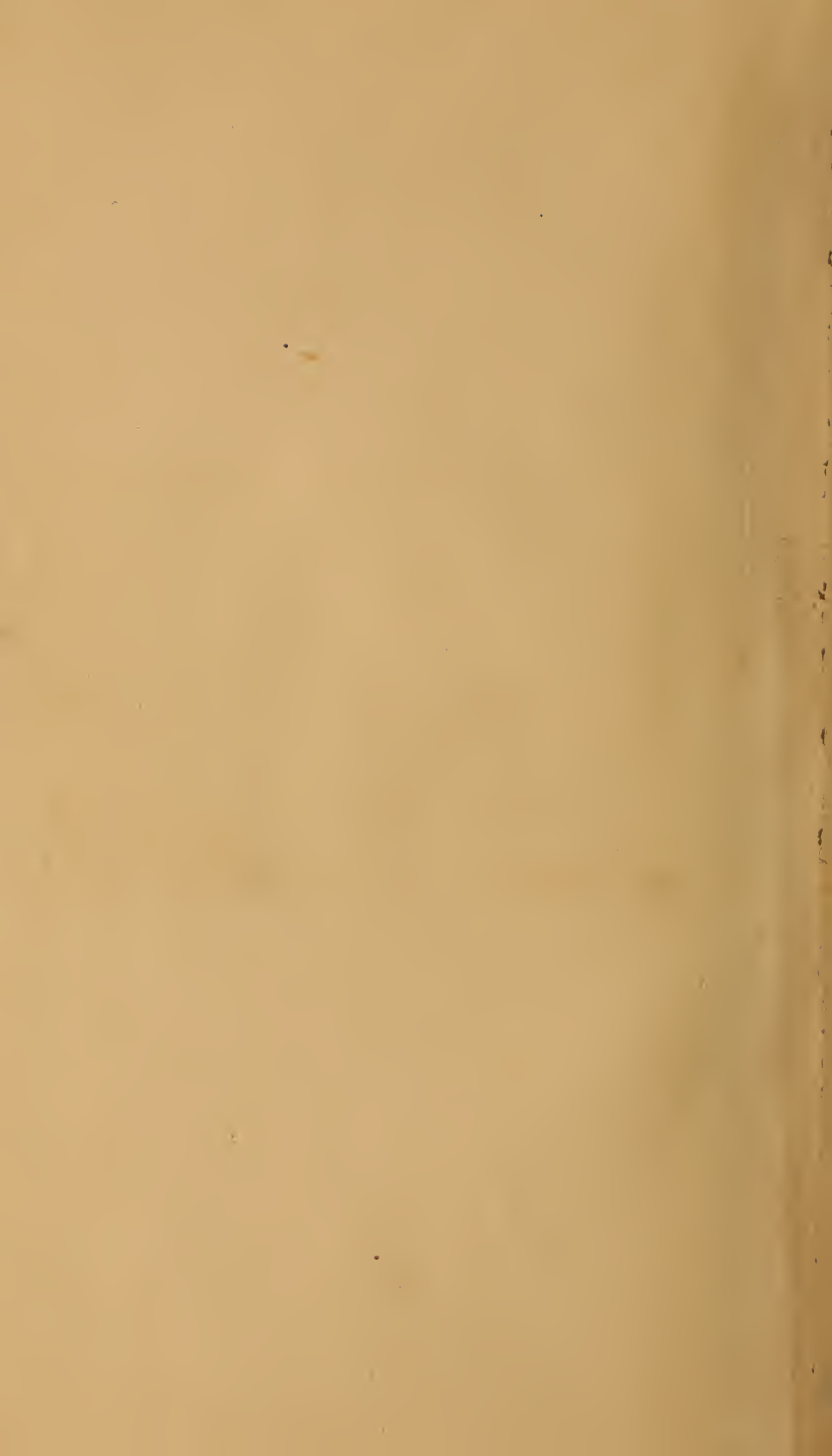


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H O N E S T Y :

A Drama.

BY

HENRY SPICER, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE LORDS OF ELLINGHAM," "LOST AND WON," &c.

Price Four Shillings.

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H O N E S T Y :

A Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

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By HENRY SPICER, Esq.

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"There's somewhat in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by and by."

LONDON:

G. W. NICKISSON, 215 REGENT STREET.

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PREFACE.

THE publication of a third unacted play is an attack upon the good-nature of one's friends, that seems to require something like explanation, if not apology.

Those, then, which were intended for the *vital* parts (so to speak) of the following drama, were written at a time when the prospect was held out of the representation of one of my plays, during the then current season, upon those boards where, if powerful acting, liberality, and taste in the *mise en scène*, could have supplied the absence of vigorous writing, all had surely gone well.

The piece, however, was not completed in time, and the production of a former one — the Lords of Ellingham — altered for the purpose — was prevented (solely, as I was given to understand) by a temporary illness that induced me to delay, for a short time, accepting the proposal of the manage-

ment, to which, at any other moment, I should have delightedly acceded.

Perhaps, had the time expended in re-writing *two* plays been less completely at my own disposal, I might have more deeply regretted my dependence upon the good faith of those parties who thought fit to keep expectation alive, with, at least, *questionable* intentions of fulfilling it.

This, and other circumstances having somewhat damped the eagerness and pleasure with which I once looked forward to the representation of any piece from my hand, I have aimed less at dramatic effect, in the following pages, than at the completion of a story of sufficient general interest to amuse the friendly few who are likely to peruse it.

H. S.

6 Upper Grosvenor Street,
October 24, 1842.

CHARACTERS.

MEN.

SIR PHILIP LANCASTER, *of honourable descent and enormous wealth.*

DOUGLAS TRAFFORD, *Cousin, and the favoured suitor, of JULIA.*

LORD SEYLE,	}	<i>Suitors to JULIA.</i>
PEMBROKE,		
MORDAUNT,		
GOSSELIN,		
SANDELL,		

FRANCIS GAGE, *an Advocate.*

CYRIL, *his brother.*

DEVERELL, *a knavish usurer.*

FAIRFAX, *Steward to TRAFFORD.*

WOMEN.

JULIA, *only child of LANCASTER.*

INFELICE, *an Italian orphan, betrayed by TRAFFORD.*

*Judges, Creditors, other suitors of JULIA, Soldiers, Bailiffs,
Servants, &c. &c.*

SCENE.—*London and the environs.*

H O N E S T Y.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A SALOON IN TRAFFORD'S HOUSE.

*It appears in great confusion, as from an over-night feast.
Chairs displaced—cups strewn about—with cards, dice,
&c. Servants arranging the disorder.*

FIRST SERVANT (*yawning*).

Trust me, a hearty revel! Be there many
Such, and so loud?

SECOND SERVANT.

Our Christian week, sir, holds
Seven days. Be thankful they're not eight. Thou'rt spared
One banquet weekly.

FIRST SERVANT.

Seven feasts i' the week!
But, sure, the Sabbath——

SECOND SERVANT.

O, sir, 'tis observed.

Dice are forbid—('tis true, the wine-cask bleeds)—

No songs—(but then the jest and roaring tale

Fill up the void). They feast—gape—snore . . . and lo!

'Tis Monday—and the dice at large again.

FIRST SERVANT (*looking round*).

He must be wealthy. Surely 'tis our fault

If we don't thrive.

SECOND SERVANT.

It is right shrewdly said.

Pity thy wisdom comes so late a-field!

This is a world of change—a knavish world—

A very slippery and uncertain world;

And if we lag and sleep, the while it turns,

'Tis ten to one our places are supplied

By better tumblers. Mark this cup, now.—Gold—

Enchased, they call it. Curious figures round

Enhance its native worth. You see it? Nay,

Look closer yet. You see it?

FIRST SERVANT.

Plainly.

SECOND SERVANT.

Good.

I put it in my pocket. (*Conceals it.*)

FIRST SERVANT.

Well?

SECOND SERVANT.

That's all:

I put it in my pocket. Gold, sir, is

A marketable metal.

FIRST SERVANT.

Aye, but——

SECOND SERVANT (*points across*).

Look!—

There stands a pepper-castor—massive gold—

Sworn brother to the goblet. Put it up.

You pause? Permit me. (*Pockets it.*) Now, sir, to explain

My somewhat hasty doings—simply know

Our master's finished.

FIRST SERVANT.

Eh?

SECOND SERVANT.

Concluded, sir,—

Thrown his last cast—disbursed his final crown—

And some few more.

FIRST SERVANT.

Nay, then, to business. This (*secretly plate, &c.*)

For wages due—next year.—This, to repay

My loss of service.—This—hey!—stop!—'tis he!

And who comes with him? (*Looks out.*) Fairfax.SECOND SERVANT (*snaps his fingers*).That for *him*!

He is as great a—that's to say, as wise

As you or I. Shall we withdraw? Away, then.

[*As they retire, TRAFFORD enters, FAIRFAX following with papers, &c. TRAFFORD paces the room in agitation.*]

TRAFFORD.

Plate?—Jewels?

FAIRFAX.

Gone.

TRAFFORD.

My armoury?

FAIRFAX.

Gone too.

'Twas the Lord Seyle——

TRAFFORD (*pausing*).

Ha! Seyle?

FAIRFAX.

Alack!—I knew

He hath your hatred—but, what help?—He said

In charity he bought it.—Dealt with you

For charity!—Heaven pardon him! His eye

Flickered with malice, as he mumbled that

The rats, which did infest his household, might

Henceforth have lodgings cheap. And so, with more

Ill-favoured, apish grins, and pointless jests,

Cast me his purse; but 'twas of slight avail,

For fifty parched and drougthy mouths did catch

The golden drops—aye, almost ere they fell.

TRAFFORD.

Go—sell my horses.

FAIRFAX.

Pardon, sir: that's done.

There's not a hair, black, sorrel, brown, or bay,

Housed in your stalls.

TRAFFORD.

Psha!—sir—'tis fiction! What—
How—must I beg? What have I left?

FAIRFAX (*counting on his fingers*).

Your rings.

Your garments—your——

TRAFFORD (*seizing him furiously*).

Knave! dost thou rob thy lord,
And mock him after? If thy dismal tale
Be true, the proof on 't. Wherefore didst not speak
Of this?

FAIRFAX (*sullenly*).

I did. The fault was in those ears
That would not listen to unwelcome truths.
I told you we were beggars. "*Beggars, ha!*"
So you replied—" *Pity the foot-sore knaves;
Let them be fed and seen to.*" Next, perchance,
Some banquet was ordained, and when I said
To pay that feast, your horses must—" *Ha! horse!
Clean-limbed and full? Is he of caste and blood?
Let him be bought.*" Then if, in sheer despair,
I dashed the empty coffer on the floor,
And, fanwise, flourishing these pleasant scrolls,
Commanded your brief notice,—"*Out!*" you cried—
"*Hence with these follies now! I'll look to them
To-morrow—or the next day—or, perhaps,
The next.*"

TRAFFORD.

Enough, sir—cut this lecture short:

Seek Deverell out—the crafty usurer,
And bid him——

FAIRFAX.

He will lend no more. 'Tis worse—
He has been loud for present satisfaction
Of monies long fall'n due. Yet more I dread
His sudden quiet. He's a beast that loves
An ambush to his soul!

TRAFFORD (*agitated*).

To be struck down
Within a leap of safety! Three short months
Of closer suit had won me the fair child
Of wealthy Lancaster,—and——Fellow *thou*—
Hast thou dealt truly with me? Proofs of this—
Thy proofs?

FAIRFAX (*coolly*).

A legion, sir.

[*Opens a door at the back, through which
enter a number of persons of mean
appearance—creditors of TRAFFORD.*

FAIRFAX *retires*.

TRAFFORD (*starting back*).

Am I beset

With thieves? My steward, sirs, shall ——

FIRST CREDITOR.

Sir, our throats

Are hoarse with pressing him for aid; our feet
Weary with tracking him. He bade us hither,
Saying that when you saw our wasted mien,

And ragged robes, you could not choose but hear,
And give us monies—he himself had none.

TRAFFORD (*after a pause addressing one*).

Your claim?

FIRST CREDITOR.

'Tis quickly said. You owe me, sir,
A poor five hundred crowns. That's, to your worship,
A supper missed—to me, existence. Sir,
Fever attacked my house. No leech was there
To stop the plague—no nurse to soothe—no priest
To whisper comfort. My young son was seized,
And ta'en to sea. I could not buy him off:
These woes broke down my father's heart. Last night
The old man died.

TRAFFORD.

A sad tale, briefly told.
Well, sir, your claim?

SECOND CREDITOR.

Your steward came to me
Weeping, and cursing the hard fate that made him
Slave to a thriftless lord. He knew my soul
Did teem with gracious feelings, as my purse
With cash; and still his cry was gold—gold—gold—
Give him but gold, and—so Heaven prosper him—
It should be paid—yea, trebly.... By my heart,
I could not see the old man weep, and tear
Locks white as these. I pledged my house, my land,
Yea, all my substance—gave him what he sought,
And, for return, am beggared. For the debt,
I will forgive it—noble sir,—I will—

Being no usurer—give but *half*—mark that—
But half mine own.

TRAFFORD.

Enough—stand back, old friend.
We'll speak again. And *thou*?

THIRD CREDITOR.

I dealt in gems.
The Lady Julia ——

TRAFFORD (*hastily*).

So—the pearls. Go on.
But to the tale. What next?

THIRD CREDITOR.

Good sir, no more,—
No more; for, with those priceless gems, was strung
The hoarding of a life. My credit's gone
From too much faith in your nobility;
And I, once rich in good report, am called
Rogue, cheat, and thief! Sir, you may pay the debt—
Save me from starving—give me back the gems—
But you have crushed a fairer pearl than all—
Mine honourable name.

FIRST CREDITOR.

O, sir, reflect!
Sickness and Famine—these are dreary guards
Before our daily threshold.

SECOND CREDITOR.

Sir, the law
Would aid us—aye, and surely—but we'd trust
Your goodness rather.

THIRD CREDITOR.

But the means to cure
My wounded name——

FIRST CREDITOR.

The sick ones, sir, at home!

SECOND CREDITOR.

Half, sir; but *half*!

FIRST CREDITOR.

Something the while for food.

SEVERAL.

Sir—sir—in pity!

TRAFFORD (*apart*).

And this work is mine.

I—I have made these poor homes desolate—
From infant mouths kept back the wholesome food—
Brought clouds upon the fair and prosperous morn
Of honest industry; trod merit down;
Struck from the old man's hand the crutch and stay,
And left him prostrate!—I—O God!—their tales
Cry to me with a truthful, hungry woe,
Like half-repentred sins . . . Ho there! within—
Fairfax!

[*Enter DEVERELL with Officers.*OFFICER (*to DEVERELL*).

Our man, sir?

DEVERELL.

In the gold brocade.
Flowers spring in dunghoops; gaudy feathers root
In rankest carrion.

TRAFFORD.

Villain! beast! How now?

} *Speaking together.*

Thou crawling, cozening slave! dost thou lift up
Thy heel against me? Where's thy fawning now?
Thy beck, thy grins, thy honeyed speeches?

DEVERELL.

Gone

On errands of more profit. Come, sir, shape
Your language to your state.—Why do ye pause?
Arrest this man. His three chief debts are mine,
Which if he pay not, doit and stiver down,—
Farewell this goodly day. 'Twill tease his eyes
No more. *[A Servant enters with a letter.]*

SERVANT.

Sir, from Sir Philip Lancaster,
Urging your presence. *[Exit.]*

TRAFFORD (*reads eagerly*).

What! — hum — ha! — ha! — ha!
Lancaster to the rescue! Glorious missive!
All's saved — all's well! *[Reads again.]*

OFFICER (*aside to DEVERELL*).

Shall we proceed, sir?

DEVERELL.

Fool!

Would you lift canvass ere you know the wind?
(*To TRAFFORD.*) Your noble kinsman, sir, I trust, is well
As his best friends could wish. His age —

TRAFFORD.

Here still?

Be of our council then. Come hither. Read — . . .
What say you?

DEVERELL (*bowing*).

Sir, your very humble slave.

Shall I be favoured with your ——

TRAFFORD.

Where's thy purse?

Quick, sir, — so — so — hast more? Then skip — 'Twould
pose

The devil, to tell which side of thy double face

Shews uglier — slave or bully!

[*Exeunt DEVERELL and Officers.*]

Leave me now,

My friends; and mark — to-morrow each man's claim

Shall meet due justice. Stay! there's gold for those

Whose wants are loudest-tongued. You, sir, away

To your sick brood. Hold! — take this ring — provide

Good lodging, and withal such comfort as

Their grief hath stomach for. Farewell! — away!

And fail me not to-morrow.

[*Exeunt Creditors. Re-enter FAIRFAX.*]

Now, good Fairfax,

Is not this well? Sir Philip writes me here,

That, hearing of my suit so fondly urged

To his fair daughter, and sole heiress — and

Feeling that wealth so vast as must endow

That tender spirit, asks some sterner hand

To wield — requires me therefore put, at once,

My hope to issue. If I win — (*reading*) I win

Her heart, then. "Take her," it concludes—aye, "take her,

Good Master Trafford — *she is thine!*" O, joy!

O, heaven!

FAIRFAX.

You love her, then, sir ?

TRAFFORD.

Why — of course :

She will expect it. But her wealth, man ! think
Of that ! To stop yon howling throats—to sweep
Out of my fortune's droughty channel, with
This rich and bounteous stream, yon carrion flies
That 'gin to settle there—to scatter flowers
In her fair path whose wealth provides them ; — then,
If there be surplusage —

FAIRFAX.

What then ?

TRAFFORD.

To build
An altar, Fortune, to thy goddessship ;
For ever when my need has blamed thee most,
Hast thou been near me.

FAIRFAX (*anxiously*).

But, sir, are you sure —

TRAFFORD.

Of winning ? As that thou art. — Listen, sir —
Thine ear, — nay, thou art old, and reck'st not of
Such toys. O, Fairfax, be content — *she's mine !*

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—A MAGNIFICENT APARTMENT IN THE HOUSE
OF SIR PHILIP LANCASTER.

He is seated in a large chair, JULIA on a low seat at his side.

JULIA.

How! leave you, sir? Is your poor nurse become
So rude and careless in her ministry,
So drowsy in her vigil——

SIR PHILIP (*fretfully*).

No, girl, no!

I said not that. Why do you ever thus
Strive to pervert my meaning? Wherefore daub
In false and ugly colours, wrung from your
Wrong fancy, my poor, honest thought; and teach
My servants likewise? You believe me — aye —
Aye—by your winks, side-looks, and sneers, you think me
A weak old man — a pettish, weak old man!
One to be dawdled, humoured, trifled with —
Told fondling lies ——

JULIA.

Nay — nay, dear sir.

SIR PHILIP.

A child,

That must be put, with soothing, sugared words,
From dangerous asking. Why, what's seen in me
To argue dotage? When do I sit at gaze,
Gibbering, and making mouths at vacancy?—
Call the stars comfits — think this chair my steed —

Wash hands i' the moonlight? Daughter, I will prove
My manhood now. — But, Julia — Julia — child,
'Tis hard that thou should'st mock me !

JULIA.

If one thought
Untempered with its most fit attributes—
Dear love and deepest reverence—ever stirred
Within my breast, or quickened on my lip
In words, may the great ear of Heaven be sealed,
For ever, 'gainst my prayer, and mostly *then*
When my poor soul hath need.

SIR PHILIP (*fretfully*).

Let her speak on !
Still pausing—still—whene'er my soul grows warm,
And steals into the music ! . . . O my bird—
My melodist ! whose song so gently chides
My erring fancies home—when thou art caged,
Must thou, as all thy prisoned woodmates do,
Give up thy wilding sweetness ? I'll not think
Of that—Alas, me !—Warble as thou wilt,
I shall not hear thee.

[*Weeps.*]

JULIA (*apart*).

There's some painful thought—
Or half-born purpose, struggling in his brain,
That vainly taxes the enfeebled mind
For aid to live. I'll humour it . . . Dear sir,
Why then fling forth your happy bird to find
Some rough, exacting master, who will change
The songs you love to weeping ? Is't to mend
Her fortunes ?—They are whole. Win pleasures ?—Why,

I would not give—no, not for twenty thrones—
This low stool at your feet.

SIR PHILIP (*quickly*).

Nay, but you must—

And shall! I'll have no glittering, foppish fools—
Pert, feathered popinjays—come swaggering here,
Peeping, and pointing at a fond, fair girl,
Who—to their envy and her own lost pain—
Wastes the bright sunshine of her happiest years
Upon an old, gnarled tree. Owls as they are,
There's truth in their dull croakings.

JULIA.

Aye—enough

To give the lie to their wisdom. Dearest father,
Let me be still your——

SIR PHILIP.

Child—I need thee not.

Love thee—how dearly!—but I need thee not.

Yes—*thou*—my music, light, and strength, and eye—

The one green leaf crowning my wint'ry age—

My comfortable book, wherein I read

Sweet tales of heaven! thou must begone, forsake

Thy fair affections, excellent gifts—and gild

One of that covetous myriad. To that end,

I have bade them hither.

JULIA (*faintly*).

Who, my father?

SIR PHILIP.

Who!

Your suitors, child. All that desire to win

Your love or gold. Proud Pembroke—Douglas Trafford—

Thy mincing flatterer, yonder—he that sings—
Mordaunt, the soldier—the grim miser, Seyle—
And flocks of meaner note—all craving. I
Proclaimed an open field, and there shall be,
I trow, no lack of champions.

JULIA (*starting up*).

How, sir! make
A market of your child?

SIR PHILIP (*seizing her hand*).

Dare but oppose
My will in this, and—darling as thou art—
The knot that ties together my old life—
I'll sever thee! Say 'tis my will herein
To prove thy wit and judgment. Choose thou shalt—
Not as I point—no, no—take or reject—
Break hearts or heal them—patch torn fortunes—shew
Vain heads their emptiness—smile—weep—or frown—
None shall say nay—I would not seek to bind
Thy tender judgment to an old warped will—
No—Heaven forbid, my child. Ho, there!—within!

[*Servants enter*].

My daughter needs her tirewomen. The guests
Arrive?

SERVANT.

The hall is thronged, sir. Some remain
Still in the antechamber.

SIR PHILIP (*signs to Attendants*).

Here—I come.

[*Exeunt*].

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—THE STREET EXTERIOR OF SIR PHILIP'S
MANSION.

*Guests arriving from time to time. — Enter F. GAGE, a
Pauper following.*

GAGE.

Nay, spare thy thanks, man ; I rejoice with thee.
Not I — but truth, put forth thy stifled wrongs ;
Not I — but justice, gave them victory :
Therefore, no more. Haste, and make glad thy home,
And husband thy new gain.

PAUPER.

But, sir — dear sir —
Touching the wage wherewith I said — (I don't
Mean to deny it) I would pay your toil,
Should it avail aught — you must think that, now,
Being rich, my neighbours will expect some show
Befitting —

GAGE (*aside, observing guests*).

Still they come ! . . . Still more — and yet
'Tis but a churlish revel. No fair face

In all their gilded rout!—Ha, Seyle! Is't thou?
It was a spell of power made thee assume
Thy golden tatters!

PAUPER.

As I was saying, sir —
True, I am rich; but wealth, so hardly won,
Should be spent sparingly. If these ten crowns——

GAGE (*aside, eagerly*).

The strangest concourse! Mordaunt, too, and Graeme —
In faith, here will be jarring interests,
Or rumour lies. Who next?

PAUPER (*aside*).

Nay, if he cares
No more for't—these five crowns—or three—or none—
Sir — hem! Good morning!

GAGE.

Stay — your suit is won.
You are rich—have plenty; I have nor wealth, nor friend,
Save a poor brother, hunger-sick, at home!
(*Aside.*) Still they throng in. Hark, man—I am dis-
tressed —
Give me — or lend!

PAUPER (*aside*).

So poor! A trifle, then,
Will answer all. My good friend, if this crown
May help thee, take it. Justice won my cause,
Not thou.

[*Exit.*

GAGE.

Alack, poor honesty! What, Trafford!

[*Enter* TRAFFORD and PEMBROKE.

How the knave porter cringes, as to one
May be his lord! They linger——

[*He retires.*

PEMBROKE.

Truly, now —
(I have a reason for this strange demand —)
Hast ever *loved*?

TRAFFORD.

Loved! No — yes — no. I don't
Precisely recollect — but, I should say,
I never did. I've watched the sufferers, though,
From the disorder. When the wretch sits — thus —
With knitted brow, thinking he thinks — speaks short —
Refuses wine — looks sheepish — cares not much
(Bad symptom that) for play — he's sickening. When
This calm is streaked with passion, the locked lips
Open and curl, with sneers — that man's deceived,
And convalescent. But if three long months
Pass o'er him, and no change — the pulse still high —
Sleep troubled — mind abstract — and language wild —
He's dead and gone — in love. He's fit for nought
But to be scarecrow to the rest. — No, no!
I'll be no lazar in love's hospital.

[*They pass in.*

GAGE (*advancing*).

I can endure no more. To question now
Yon lackered menial. . . . Stoop, good pride.
So, friend, [*Approaches a Servant at the door.*
Sir Philip feasts to-day?

SERVANT.

If that your worship
Except not to his purpose.

GAGE.

Courteous sir,
I must be bold to tax your patience with
One other question. What event imports
This throng of manly feasters?

SERVANT (*surveying him impudently*).

Truly, friend,
Thou dost not crawl at the tail of fortune's race
Through lack of impudence. Know, then, my master
Holds, as it were, a tournament — the course
Being love—arms, purses—sword and lance, sweet words—
The prize, my lady Julia; free to all
Of worth and breeding ——

GAGE (*eagerly*).

Speak'st the truth, thou knave?
Let me go in.

SERVANT.

Oh, yes — a likely tale!
Yonder's the tavern, sir.

GAGE (*seizing him*).

Fool! — beast and fool!
Did you not tell me — Back, or ——

SERVANT (*calls loudly*).

Ho! — within! [*Enter Steward.*]
Well, sir! What now, sir? Is your humour tamed?
Shall we ——

STEWARD (*to Servant*).

In, fool! Ill-tongued and meddling knave,
Who bade you flout as true a gentleman
As any there, albeit his honest gown
Affects not gawd or foppery? [*Exit Servant.*
Pardon him,
Good master Gage; I know you, and — I trust —
So does my mistress. It was no slight aid
You rendered yestermorn, when your prompt hand
Reined in her frightened steed. Will you go in?
This way the guest-room lies — but, sir — I fear —
[*Exeunt speaking.*

SCENE II.—A SALOON.

SIR PHILIP *seated*.—JULIA *beside him*.—TRAFFORD *stands near her*.—PEMBROKE, LORD SEYLE, SANDELL, GOSSELIN, MORDAUNT, and others, *suitors, standing or walking, in conversation.*

GOSSELIN.

Psha! sorry jesting, was't not?

PEMBROKE.

'Tis so old

A loser's fashion, to abuse the game,

I hold my tongue : but I had no chance — none —
Nor hope to win.

SANDELL.

Nor I.

MORDAUNT.

I would there were
Less of the angel in that face!

SEYLE (*aside*).

Or fewer
In good Sir Philip's coffers. I can less
Forgive their want.

SIR PHILIP.

Why, how now, gentlemen !
Silenced so soon ! Your merits and your claims,
So deftly weighed and rated ? When I wooed,
I would have ta'en my sword-knot for a rope,
And hanged myself i' the gate, ere I'd have been
So quickly answered. One would think this wench
Had better patience—less desire to quit
Her old, weak, whimsical, tyrannical sire,
Than hath been boldly spoken ; and must this—
This beauty own no lord—this princely wealth
No master ? Fie ! What's to be done in this
Sad strait ? You, master Trafford, you alone—
I think—of all this goodly company—
Have not essayed if yon fair, open palm
Hath will to close yet.

TRAFFORD.

O sir, I await

My turn. What champion next ? [*Enter a Servant.*]

SERVANT.

A gentleman
Claims audience, sir, and——

SIR PHILIP.

Bid him come.

TRAFFORD (*aside*).*Another!*

The show will ne'er be done! Some giddy fool!

[*Enter F. GAGE.*

No—as I live, the cunning man of law
That pleaded 'gainst me when yon beggar won
Redress—'twas called so—for the means wherewith
I wrested from him what I thought my own!

SIR PHILIP.

Your name is—

GAGE.

It is—Gage.

TRAFFORD.

More often styled
“The beggar's advocate.”

GAGE (*turning*).

Sir, if your wit
Produce no fairer sample, this keen jest
Shall draw no strife between us.

SIR PHILIP.

Heed him not,
Good master—Pardon me; my memory halts
At a new name. Your outward fashion, sir,
Plain though it be—endangers not your end,

So there be that within, may challenge claim
To my child's love.

TRAFFORD.

Sir, he has none.

GAGE.

No claim !

No claim ! — Oh ! by that heaven whose equal will,
Scorning man's weak and petty laws, knits up
The rent and various fragments of this world,
In one great family — I do put forth
Claims great and manifold ! — I loved this lady —
And do believe that love so hopeless, yet
So true, doth draw into itself some part
Of the perfection of the thing beloved —
Breathing an essence, a sweet, natural life,
In the else worthless void. Did I lack blood,
This had ennobled me. Were I poor — (and 'faith,
The ravens are my betters, seeking not
In vain their daily bread) — this, *this* had been
My mighty and exhaustless treasure-house.
O, I have claim to all, save hope — and that
Belongs to fairer fortunes.

SIR PHILIP.

Frankly said.

Your answer, girl ?

JULIA (*in a low voice*).

What other, sir, than that

Which to no stranger, like this gentleman,
Can sound ungracious ? Thanks — no more.

GAGE.

Indeed!

And such a stranger, madam, that no chance—
No trick of juggling fortune, ever placed
That hand in mine?

TRAFFORD (*apart*).What means the fellow? *He*

Clasp hands with—Why, by heaven, her brow is flame—
And 'tis not anger, nor amazement—no!

'Those eyes have met, too. (*Aside to her.*)Cousin—Julia—*madam!*

What mystery is here? What secret power
Holds yon pale mummer o'er thy speaking blood?

How—mute? [*Approaches SIR P. and speaks aside.*GAGE (*aside*).

Pity and pride at strife! . . . Enough.

Thou wouldst not know me, Julia; so, indeed,
Thou shalt not . . . I mistook, sirs, and my claims
Are even as my hopes—and that is—nothing.

TRAFFORD.

Then wherefore came you hither, sir?

GAGE.

To glean

One ray of honour for an ill-starred name;
Once to look nearly on a beautiful world
Impervious to my tread; perchance to paint
In a few cold, blank, dreary words, this sea
Of swelling passion,—then resume the path
I ne'er had quitted—if—But who that loves
Is wise? I pray you, pardon, if my speech

Lacks some coherence. I have slept ill — am sick
With toil—or tears. . . . There is no more to say—
Only be it recorded on my grave
That I did love the lady Julia. [Going.

TRAFFORD (*starting forward*).

By heaven, she weeps! Fellow, whoe'er thou art,
Take thyself hence—or shall my grooms essay
What weight of whipcord best may penetrate
Thy leathern jerkin?

[GAGE *turns fiercely upon him, but
restrains himself. The rest draw
back.*

GAGE.

Fear not, gentlemen—

I am a harmless maniac—while you let

My passion sleep . . . (*Approaches JULIA and speaks low.*)

Ah, lady—could you read

The haughty spirit bowed before you here—

This would you grant me yet. 'Tis said, your voice,

Out of its strangely soothing melody,

Hath made the hearers weep. O, speak to me!

One word—in pity—*one*—nay, what thou wilt—

Presumptuous beggar—peasant—menial—slave!

Lady—(*looks round*)—I feel their mocking eyes like fire—

Their smiles like writhing serpents. Speak, and lift

A million worlds above their ribaldry,

The soul that, for thy sake, hath turned from heaven,

Loving thee more—

TRAFFORD (*coming forward*).

Enough, sir—you have urged

This bold presumption to the limit of
Extremest courtesy. Withdraw. You are well
And kindly answered.

GAGE (*standing with folded arms before her*).

Lady — not a word? (*She does not notice him.*)

TRAFFORD (*enraged*).

Will you not hear me, fellow? Feel, then!—

[*Strikes him with his riding-rod.*

GAGE *seizes him, and wrests
it from his hand.* TRAFFORD
draws.

SIR PHILIP (*starting up*).

Hold!

Desist, young sir! . . . Cease, Douglas: cease, I say,
This coward brawling. O, sir—does the word
Offend?—Your sword upon a man unarmed,
Who but repulses your untutored rage!
Before my child, too? Tut!—learn better, sir.
My friends, since these hot spirits have embroiled
Our peaceful meeting, let us to the board,
And you, too, master Advocate.—Nay, then,
E'en as you choose.—Farewell. [*Exit GAGE.*
You, cousin Trafford,
Who, cunning archer as thou art, hast kept
Thine arrow back—to prove how large a crowd
Thy better skill can shame—I pr'ythee keep not
My daughter long in council. Till she comes
I fast. [*Exeunt all but TRAFFORD and JULIA.*

TRAFFORD.

So, madam, this fair farce being done,

And one sole puppet left upon the board,
Will 't please you touch the wire?

JULIA.

Will 't please you, then,
Instruct me?

TRAFFORD (*impatiently*).

Sweet, no further mockery—
Long have you known my heart.—In honesty,
I do believe thou'rt mine: therefore, at once
Speak it—and with one gracious word repay
The insults unavenged, so lately borne,
And for thy sake.

JULIA.

I humbly thank you, sir.
And, since repentance must be shewn by prompt
Confession—*I have* loved you, cousin.

TRAFFORD.

Aye—

JULIA.

Aye—so it is—or *was*; for, as I live,
I like not tavern brawls; not much affect
Their company, who riot, drink, pervert
The darling ends of wisdom, and believe
Love's hallowed fabric based on filthy gold.
I will not be commanded,—yea, myself
Being proud, do, as the proud are ever wont,
Dislike my haughty peers. So, for these causes,
I will not be your wife. Nay—not a word—
I will not hear thee speak; nor e'en endure
Thy longer presence. Cousin, fare thee well.

Get thee another riding-rod—and cease
Thy swaggering exploits in the hall of peace.

[*Exit JULIA.*

SCENE III.—THE HALL OF TRAFFORD'S HOUSE.

A crowd of persons. FAIRFAX at a table, with money, &c.

FAIRFAX (*paying several*).

There—there—and there. Still crowding! I have but
Two hands, and that's a couple more than men
Like using for this sport. There, sir; take back
Thy burly form—and give thy weaker friend
Some chance to get his own. This is a court
Where justice' scales weigh truly. Hold, man—so—

A MAN.

Good sir, you've paid me double.

FAIRFAX.

Heaven and earth!—

Have we an artist here? Take this man's face—
Get it thrice copied. Hang up one i' the market—
One in the palace—(Hold, sir; take thy gold.)—
One in my lady's bower. 'Tis honesty
Disguised as man! (*Looks round.*) Content?

MANY VOICES.

All! all!

[TRAFFORD *enters cloaked, and
pauses unobserved.*

FAIRFAX.

Off then,
Ye cormorants!—and, mark me, give not out
That 'tis a roguish world. Two proofs are here
In contradiction. . . . One man claims no more
Than his fair due. Another—that's my lord—
Strips his own shoulders; sells his horses—rings—
Begg, borrows—yea, he pilfers, since 'tis theft
Fondly to trust the future—and all this
To see your claims amended.

[*Exeunt Creditors.* TRAFFORD advances.]

TRAFFORD.

Fairfax!—

FAIRFAX (*starting*).

Ha!

TRAFFORD.

This is the truth?

FAIRFAX.

Aye, sir; what boots it now
To save the crumbs, when, from the royal feast,
The lady Julia's lord may surely——

TRAFFORD.

Man!—

That hope—'tis gone—'tis lost? Have we no rope
Save that?—'Tis shipwreck, and all's done. E'en now
We drift upon the rocks—lost, shattered, sunk,
Beyond a hope or succour.

FAIRFAX (*aghast*).And—and—*Deverell*!

TRAFFORD (*gazing round*).

Death to the hound! Smells he the blood already?
What's to be done? Go howl to Lancaster
For his proud child!—No—dotard as he is,
He will not cross her . . . Might he die this night—
Much would be mine—and, Julia, but to bend
Thy haughty neck!—

FAIRFAX (*aside*).

How pale he looks?—Dear sir—

TRAFFORD.

Give me my cloak—I'll taste the air. I want
My sword, too. Never look so frightened, man!
I know what fancy moves thee.—Were it so,
Wherefore should I go forth? If I sought death,
My soul would pierce these roofs as easily
As 'twould the yielding and invisible air
Before my footstep . . . Follow *not*, I say.
[*He goes out.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A MEANLY FURNISHED CHAMBER.

F. GAGE *writing by a feeble lamp.*—CYRIL *lies stretched upon a rude mattrass on the floor.*

GAGE (*after looking up impatiently*).

No rest! no peace! Boy—Cyril—boy, I say—
Now you feign sleep—come, come—your lips but now
Shaped out articulate words. Could you be still—
Vexing yourself, you torture me—and turn
The idle loathing of a petted child
'Gainst slumber's medicine. Why so restless, boy?

CYRIL.

Because I cannot sleep.

GAGE.

You sigh, too. Why
Is that? It troubles me. Why do you sigh?

CYRIL.

For idleness.

GAGE.

Tut—tut—

CYRIL.

For pastime, then.

GAGE (*aside*).

He will not say — *for hunger*. Toss and turn,
The fiend pursues. Hark, Cyril! if I play
The slave for both, give me at least obedience,
Though I lack love.

CYRIL (*starting up*).

The slave for — love! Oh, brother,
Have I not sought — aye, even with tears — to share
This labour with you? I have strength — and — now —
Who's sick? Who's idle? Look, a page complete,
While yours is scarce begun.

GAGE (*snatching CYRIL's pen*).

Do you forget
I am your elder, sir? What folly's this?
You shall do no work, I say!

CYRIL (*faintly*).

Yes, by your leave.
Must you, though elder, slave for both?

GAGE (*falling on his shoulder*).

My Cyril,
Not in a selfish, vain reproach I spoke
Those seeming bitter words — but boasting more
The right of elder birth, to bear the load
That Fortune lays upon us. Nought beside
I claim — but this as jealously maintain
As any king his crown. Abide we firm,
And, be the seed-time weary as it will,
Fair harvest shall be shewn.

CYRIL.

I care not — I —

Let grief, let famine, crush their victims down —
There is more blessing in your love, dear brother,
Than fear in that word — death. I do not wish
To live. Do you ?

GAGE.

Do I? What! Cyril — fold
Our idle arms, and sink — because the land
Is hard to reach! Come — 'tis a coward creed —
Why those, my boy, whom giddy fortune showers
Her costliest favours on, who glitter by
Wrapt in her flimsy shows — drunk with her smile —
Are Heaven's least favoured children. The respect,
The praise, the love, that's wrung with force and pain
From churlish bosoms, is a richer boon
Than Fortune's total store can grace us with —
Leaving the giver's heart, as it wakes ours,
Healthier and happier. Come — to rest, again.
So — there — to rest — [CYRIL *lies down and sleeps.*
At last. Thanks, kindly sleep —
Unfee'd physician! work thy cure. . . . For me,
I can nor rest, nor labour.

[*He moves restlessly about—pauses.*

The dull grey
Of morn peeps through the broken pane. — 'Tis well.
Another night has crept into the void
And silent space of that eternity
That went before the world. . . . If I have scorned,
O restful night! thy brief and pricèd hours,
I have robbed them of their sterner portion, too —
Dark dream and bitter fancy. . . .

[*A knock. He does not heed it.*

O, my dreams,
You are too hopeful — too untutored yet —
I may not trust ye Julia, might'st thou wear
That peace thou tak'st away! . . . Is then my love
So guilty-deep, that only scorn can pay

[*Knocking repeated.*

No hope, indeed — in all the world, no hope!
Those desolate words, howled from the wilderness,
Or muttered from the grave —

[*Enter DEVERELL, bursting in the door.*

DEVERELL.

What airs are these,
That keep me knocking at your beggarly hutch,
As though I were your servant, fellow — not
You, *mine*?

GAGE.

You have supplied the reason. 'Tis
A beggarly hutch, and not a palace.

DEVERELL.

What!

GAGE.

I say, 'tis not a palace.

DEVERELL.

Well?

GAGE.

No need
To thunder at a poor man's door. 'Tis free
To all — as 'tis to death. Lock, bolt, and guard
The columned hall, lest shoeless beggary
Should mar the galliard, or pale famine scare

The stomach of my lord. (*Turns away.*) I am a fool
To rail!

DEVERELL.

Proceed, sir. Where didst learn this fine
Philosophy?

GAGE.

In sorrow's school.

DEVERELL.

Indeed!

He's a true marvel, that same pedagogue; —
There's not a student, under his wise rule,
But he's a paragon of virtue! Come —
My papers — are they finished?

GAGE.

No.

DEVERELL.

No! Not!

Not finished? And you dare sit idling here!
Why, sirrah, 'tis a loss of fifty pounds —
A fair half-hundred gathered from my chest, —
If 'tis a penny!

GAGE.

And to me a loss
Of — let me see — five groats. Is't not enough
To starve?

DEVERELL.

Hark, sirrah! I have known you long,
And learned your fashions. In the eyes of men
You do affect a breathless industry —
A very lust of labour — a fine love

Of honesty, which, much exalting thee,
Of all men else makes thieves; yet here you sit
In sullen laziness, that hardly deigns
Move hand to lip, charged with the unearned food
That better men provide thee. As for *him*,
Yon snoring whelp—I'll quickly — (*Approaches* CYRIL.)

GAGE (*starting up*.)

No — stand back !
He is too ill to labour. You may read
So much in that white cheek. Stand back, sir! — or —
(*Aside*) But patience first — Good master Deverell —
I pray you, do not touch my gentle brother,
Whom sickness harms enough.

DEVERELL.

'Sdeath! but I will.
Get up, sir! (*Shakes him*). He's no relative of *mine* —
But he's my servant, whom my charity
Pays—feeds,—Awake! . . . My roof, too—Up! No drones
Hive here!

[*Snatches up the bed, and* CYRIL *falls forward on the floor.*

GAGE (*rushing on him*).

Thou thing of self — unmannered beast! —
Aping man's presence! I have manhood left
To punish *thee*!

[*Hurls him to the other end of the room.*

Cheerly, my Cyril. Nay,
He is not worth a look. Lie down again —
And now I sit beside thee; if yon wretch
Lift but a finger, he shall smart for it!

DEVERELL (*who has risen slowly*).

Who houses serpents must beware their sting.

It is a perilous trade, and I'll be quit on't —

Boys! — we will speak again. [Exit DEVERELL.]

CYRIL.

Where is he gone?

What said he, brother?

GAGE.

Nay, I care not — yet

The red, malignant flicker his dull eye

Sent back to us, spoke mischief. Would thou hadst

A strength sufficient to come forth and seek

A better, friendlier shelter than this wretch,

For his own niggard ends, hath tempted me

Too rashly to embrace. If any —

[Re-enter DEVERELL.]

DEVERELL.

Now,

Good, gentle master Francis — aye, and you,

My pretty Cyril, though I'd willingly,

For very love of such good company,

Bear with some loss — I cannot entertain

Guests of such hot design. If I mistake not,

There stands a brief account between us here —

For food — for coin advanced — for lodging. Now,

Pay me — or tramp!

CYRIL.

Alas! good master —

GAGE (*pointing to CYRIL*).

Look!

He's ill.

DEVERELL.

The alms-house or the hospital ;
Or, at the worst, six boards, and nought to pay
The sexton. Come, sir. What ! no money ? None ?
Shall I be swindled thus, and when I come
Softly to seek mine own, be trundled down
Like ninepins at a fair ?

GAGE.

Let us remain
Till evening, and I will account to thee
For more than is thy due.

DEVERELL.

Do you forget
The blow ? *I* do not. Were yon livid wretch
At his last gasp, he should not spend it here !
You know the law, sir. Out he goes — away !

GAGE.

Why, then, he shall not !

DEVERELL.

Good ; I will assist
You forth. [*Stamps—Bailiff and Assistants enter.*]
Now, Master Grasp, come in, and rid
My dove's nest of these cuckoos.

[CYRIL leans faintly on F. GAGE.]

GAGE.

Such revenge
Is worth resisting ! Force alone shall move us
Even from so foul a den. [*Enter PEMBROKE.*]

PEMBROKE.

Is this — How now ?
What brawl is here ?

DEVERELL.

Another creditor!

A fellow-victim of mine own! What wool
Hast thou been fleeced of, brother innocent?
Let's bleat our griefs together.

PEMBROKE.

I am sent

To master Gage. Is this his chamber, sir?

DEVERELL.

No, sir, 'tis mine; though, 'faith, this advocate—
This man of law—would fain have argument
Whether it be mine or no. But, ne'ertheless,
Your pleasure with him?

PEMBROKE.

You're his clerk, then?

DEVERELL.

I!

His clerk! His—*I!*—Ha, ha! Hear, gentlemen,
I am this fellow's—'Sdeath, sir, you shall see
Who's clerk—who's master. Troop, ye vagabonds—
Out—out, I say!

PEMBROKE (*interposing*).

Have patience, sir; I come
To Francis Gage, the honest advocate:
If I mistake not, this is he—albeit
Was never worth more worthlessly bestowed—
More strangely companied. (*To F. G.*) May I entreat
Some words in private?

DEVERELL.

If the street may serve
For council-chamber. This fine lawyer, sir,

Hath not a closet, save what sparrows, daws,
Kites, and such vermin, share with him. Come on —
My money, sir — ten crowns — or —

PEMBROKE.

Psha! Is this
The root of all thy bawling? Hold! — these crowns
[Throws a purse.
From master Gage. So much — aye, ten times more,
Came I a debtor to him. Get thee hence,
And take thy fellows!

*[DEVERELL gazes a moment in surprise,
then goes out with attendants, &c.*

Sir, you stand amazed,
And marvel at my freedom. I am here
In anxious suit, and — as you see — do serve
Myself the nearest way.

GAGE.

Amazed I am,
To note how angel-like a friendly face
Shines forth in such a gloom. What does it here?
Sir, you have named me honest. 'Tis the badge
And scarecrow in my trade. He who treads ice
Must be shod smoothly as his glassy floor.
I can unmask a villain, but not aid:
I can detect, not practise, cozenage.
Truth is a hungry calling — in a word,
I starve, because I cannot o'erpass heaven,
And paint a black deed fair But to the point —
This double debt — how shall I pay it, sir,
And not with prayers?

PEMBROKE (*hesitating*).

I fear that — I —

GAGE.

Say on.

You have a suit that must be pressed — and I,
You know, lack labour. I'll not slumber on't —
Be sure. And, for the cause, 'tis based, I know,
On right and honesty — else wherefore jump
The greater crowd, and light on Francis Gage?

PEMBROKE.

'Faith, sir, you bid me speak, and yet your words
Crush mine i' the forming. I'd bespeak your aid
To soften guilt scarce questioned. 'T is indeed,
A monarch-fault — a crime, whose giant shape
Unfolds so redly on the eyes of men, —
Displays such foul and hideous leprosy,
It might almost be stamped a fellow-sin
To speak on such a side — or interpose
One breath, when justice, armed and terrible,
Awakes to strike it down.

GAGE.

'T is ——

PEMBROKE.

Murder !

GAGE (*quickly*).

That

Is called so, which sometimes is none. The fruit
Of madness — of enforced necessity —
Of sudden rage, repented and atoned —
Scowl Murder as he will, there's yet a stream

Can wash the dull stain from his gory brow —
That men shall pause, and turn, and give the hand,
As to a friend restored.

PEMBROKE.

But here 'tis linked
With a most foul accomplice—one that oft,
Working less bloodily, hath murdered too —
Filthy ingratitude. Serene old age,
Rich in kind deeds, in love, and charity —
But I waste time — Sir Philip Lancaster
Is dead — by poison.

GAGE.

Dead !—Then parricide
Is rife among us. Not a wretch but found
A father in him ! You would have me plead,
For his assassin ! *I*—scorned and grown poor
With shielding innocence — you'd have me — Sir,
I have not earned this insult at your hand.
Farewell.

PEMBROKE.

I leave you. Truly, I perceive
'T was wise to hold your honesty so dear,
For 'tis a costly title. (*Pauses.*) As regards
Those coins I —

GAGE (*starting*).

I had forgotten. Take
Your offered — 'Tis too late . . . Sir, do not bind
My gratitude in such foul, loathsome chains !
Nay then, — some cause — some colorable end,
Why this fair life was ta'en. Come — come — I know

There's comfort yet. A child will crush its toy,
And knit the shattered fragments up, in shape
Newly fantastic; but a man — the worst
Of men, confesses he has no power to wake
The kingly spirit — rich, immortal life,
In the corrupted clod. No savage slays
In sport! — There's nought to palliate — Madness? No,
Nor wrong? — nor insult? — nor revenge?

PEMBROKE.

Again
I say, there's none.

GAGE.

Alas, — why left you then
Your wealthy fellows, to beset me here
With unsought bounty? I am cheated — snared —
And — [CYRIL *leans upon him.*
'Tis a bargain. Now, sir, to your tale —
Out with it, quick. Shew me the ditch — the pool —
Where I must plunge these honest hands, and wring
The filthy dregs. I am guilt's sworn brother. Come,
Shew' t me, I say!

PEMBROKE..

That's reasonable, now.
Listen. An hour past sunrise, you shall hear
Two blows on yonder panel. When you'd see
The murderer ——

GAGE.

How — at large?

PEMBROKE.

But trebly girt

With eyes that would outstare the basilisk —
Stay — you may need more gold. — Here — here — and
here —

Mark me — an hour past sunrise. [Exit PEMBROKE.

GAGE (*after a pause*).

Cyril — Cyril —
Is the fiend gone?

CYRIL.

Our *friend*, dear brother! Look,
The gold —

GAGE.

Sweet Cyril — 'tis the wage of hell!
And I and honesty henceforth are foes.
[Falls on CYRIL's neck.

SCENE II.—A SALOON IN TRAFFORD'S HOUSE.

A feast — music, &c. — Guests rising to depart.

TRAFFORD (*eagerly*).

Nay — come; another round.

FIRST GUEST.

Enough — already
Day blushes for us — Look!

TRAFFORD.

Draw down the blinds.

Fresh lights! — A strain there, ho! gaily and loud —
Yon nodding minstrels—(*a song*). Wine!

SECOND GUEST.

This royal cheer
Has left us scant pretext——

TRAFFORD.

Ten thousand, sir.
Dark scenes are acting in yon outer world
May soon eclipse our sunshine — wherefore, drink —
Bar contemplation out. Hate plotting — love
With rage contending—Drink, sirs!—Avarice
Hugging the hoards that, one day hence, shall feed
The lean purse of some prodigal heir — Why, drink —
Here a poor toiling student —

[*A Servant enters. TRAFFORD starts up.*

Hold!—*apart!* (*goes aside*).

Now then, thy news?

SERVANT.

There's none, sir!

TRAFFORD.

Man — thy look
Spoke murder, at the least. (*Sits*). Another song!
A merrier. Fill the goblets.—Gentlemen,
A health—(*Guests rise*). Indeed! Well if it must be so,
'Tis pain to part—(*aside*). 'Twas more to welcome ye—
My courteous neighbours—hearty revellers —
Stout friends—(*aside*) by which I mean glib sycophants—
Rough bullies—snarling beggars—and smooth knaves.
My good friends all, farewell. [*Exeunt Guests.*
Fairfax! (*Enter Steward*). The hour?

FAIRFAX.

Night should be past, sir — yet it is not day.
The slow lids open as a wearied man
Wakes drowsily. I never knew the sun
So loath to shine.

TRAFFORD.

The world's too bad for him.
He's tiring — Hist you! — What's i' the air?

FAIRFAX.

I heard
No noise, sir.

TRAFFORD.

Man, nor I. 'Twas fancy raised
Those shouts — and cries of — (*a roll of thunder*) — Hark!

FAIRFAX.

'Tis thunder.

TRAFFORD.

Groans
Wrung from the over-burdened element —
Not — as some say — the Voice — — [*Enter a Servant.*

SERVANT.

A woman, sir,
Craved shelter from the storm, who, having heard
Your name, fell swooning — and hath since besought
A moment's speech with you.

TRAFFORD.

Admit her. Leave me. [*Exeunt Servants. Enter INFELICE.*
Spirit of unrest!
Always prophetic of mischance and ill,
Why dost thou ever haunt me?

INFELICE.

For revenge,
Or justice.

TRAFFORD.

Canst thou threaten?—Foolish wench,
The spring-day of my passion hath gone by.
Did I not tell thee that I could not love?
Look on my cheek—'tis white; the eye-lid, dry—
There, take my hand—'tis cold. You cannot trace
Love's fever in't. The pulse—'tis slow and dull—
Passion's quick foot skips like a bacchanal!
Speak, girl; what would you? Speak!

INFELICE.

Alas! alas!
For the dear quiet meadows where we passed
That first unconscious time? Why did you teach
The wrong you will not mend? Why roughly wake
This restless, inward monitor—then leave me
To bear the scourge alone? Why say that we
Should, in like peace, with hands thus fondly twined,
And hearts thus bound—pass on from youth to age—
And I, *thy wife*? Alas! I knew not then
What worth was in that word. Both blest, and I
So rich in love—I would have given it for
A kiss—a smile—a word—a very *word*—
Had you so wooed me.

TRAFFORD.

Why this change?

INFELICE (*concealing her face*).

Because

It lacked the mirror of the world's hard eye
To teach my heart its nakedness.

TRAFFORD.

Enough —

My girl. You speak in vain. Between our souls
Is hung a veil, through whose funereal gauze,
Thy form, once fair, grows hideous. You know not
What toils environ me — what frowning fears
Make death seem beautiful.

INFELICE (*eagerly*).

Dash them aside,
And live! A gentle voice to our lost home
Recalls us: come away. Quit these dark scenes,
And seek once more the valley where we strayed
From morn, not blither than our own glad souls,
Till languid eve, when to our lattice-pane
The prating night-breeze stole, with kiss and hymn,
To chide our tireless talk. Cheerly — sweet life —
Come — we have both been wanderers — I, the first,
Have seen the peril of the way — and now
By honour's path — to truth — to peace — to love —
To calm in this poor world — and bliss beyond —
I woo thee back.

[TRAFFORD *turns, deeply moved, and
holds her by both arms apart.*

TRAFFORD.

My love! — my own!

INFELICE.

Ah — Heaven!

He loves me yet! *Thine own!* Oh, let me die

INFELICE.

Alas !

What dreadful thing has chanced?—speak—dearest —
speak—

Let me partake thy sorrow.

TRAFFORD (*trying to avoid her*).

Woman—go!—

You madden me—

INFELICE (*clinging to him*).

I love thee.

TRAFFORD.

Hence, I say !

Is this a time for—(*in a low voice*)—Infelice——

INFELICE (*frantically*).

No !

Not for thy wooing voice ! 'Twas *that* betrayed me—

Now speak in thunder—stab me—trample me—

But say I shall be thine——

[TRAFFORD *throws her off, and exit*.

Listen, thou earth !

Mine only parent—ere this humbled knee

Lift from thy dusty bosom life's dull load.

From throne and empire do I here depose

My o'erenduring love—thought, word or deed,

By love engendered, do confess a sin—

And every gift of nature—reason—strength—

Wit—courage—craft—devote, to furnish forth

A vengeance, worthy of my wrongs—and—*thee!*

[*Rises, and exit*.

SCENE III.—THE APARTMENT OF GAGE.

He is reading.

GAGE.

“Wherefore, to let the guilty ’scape the law,
“Is so much mercy as *he* finds, who slips
“The hangman’s gripe, and, leaping, is impaled
“Upon the spears below.” ’Tis quaintly summed—
But with such close and cogent reasoning,
Thou plead’st for patience, and the sheathed sword—
’Tis won and herein will I marshal me
Upon the piteous side. (*Shuts the book.*) All-seeing
Power,
Who would’st not heed that Thy regenerate child
Still bowed in the idol’s fane—in that he scorned
The painted dust before him—pardon me
This seeming fellowship—A sound—a step!
The murderer comes. O guilt! what deadly fear—
What sick, expectant tremor, conscience-born,
Is eloquent in every glance and breath,
Footfall and finger-touch! If thou dost dread
A *brother’s* look, how—(*A knock.*) Thou knock’st timidly
For one of heart so bold! Approach. Was’t thus
Thou shedd’st, assassin, stealthy drop by drop,

Into the chalice, crowned to welcome thee—
The subtle life-bane? Come, I say——

(*Enter JULIA, alone.*)

(*Without turning.*) Approach

Why dost thou hesitate? I sit not here

To judge thee—but defend. What, robbed of speech!

(*Aside.*) Perchance he weeps—and if he weeps, there's
shame—

And shame is pitiful. [*Looks round, and starts up.*

(*After a pause.*) 'Tis life! It breathes!

Oh, lady—why . . . Your will, beseech you?—Pardon—

I did not dream of this. 'Twas Pembroke's tongue

Bade me expect—not *thee*—dear lady—but

A fiend of blood!

JULIA.

He was my messenger;

And did his mission truly. All, save he,

Fled from my side, scared by this bloody cloud—

And left me to the storm.

GAGE.

Grief, gentle lady,

For this most sudden and most foul misdeed,

Hath hurt your reason. God shall give you tears—

And, in those healthful moments, calmly join

The ill with its assuagement.

JULIA.

Do I speak

In words so unconsidered? Pardon me.

I would be brief, for there, without, stand those

Will not, I fear, be long controlled. Then know,
I am by nature cold and passionless ;
An un-emotioned, tearless wretch—Alas !
Not so, the happier. Such mental mould
Repels the pigmy darts that slay the weak ;
But where the arrow pierces it remains,
And rankles to the core. Not joy, nor grief,
Nor any sharp soul-sickness, ever dimmed
Mine eye—nor spurred these pulses. Place a hand
Here, on my breast, and there's the heart within
Coldly and sternly pacing, to and fro,
His natural prison. Yet if thou believe
Dry lids can argue madness—give me help,
And, in good time, I'll weep.

GAGE.

Speak, madam.

JULIA.

I

Am called Sir Philip's murderer !

GAGE.

Thou? O Heaven !

Falsehood itself recoils from such a word.
Who dares accuse thee? Tell me—let me seek
In his black heart ——

JULIA.

Restrain this passion, sir.

It is mistimed. I seek an advocate—
A man of peace—crafty, and wise, and cool ;
Quick to discern, and patient to enlarge

Such flaw as chance may offer, in that net
Meant to enmesh the guilty ——

GAGE.

Ay, the guilty—
But oh, not *thee* !

JULIA.

Have I denied the deed?

GAGE.

Thou wilt do so How long wilt thou endure
This bold, inquiring gaze?—I do not say
I think thee guilty—yet, on such a hand,
The leprosy of blood Proud woman, not
One haughty word? Your lips move not—your cheek
Retains its pale, inexplicable hue. . . . (Pauses.)
Then, serpent sin, erect thy coiling folds
To Heaven!—Ha! dost thou smile?

JULIA.

Ay, sir; to hear
Your courtly speech. But I'll offend no more
In mirthful sins let's to the work in hand;
For my unliveried pages will abide
No longer question. Listen. I was seized—
The fatal goblet in *this* hand—and *this*,
Glued to the old man's white and wrinkled brow,
Groping 'midst its dead pulses, to discern
If more were left to do. Thus was I found.
I—I—his nurse—his leech—his cupbearer—
Almost his pillow—for, no sleep so calm
As that which visited those grey old lids
At rest upon my bosom.

GAGE.

Thanks, kind Heaven!

All 's clear—all 's safe!—You knew not—could not
dream

What death was in the cup?

JULIA.

So well I knew

That silent agent's skill and potency,

That when I saw the baleful glitter hang

Upon his lip, I knew me fatherless,

Ere life had fluttered forth. Have I not said

None but myself did cater to his meal?

None but myself watched o'er his slumbering?

Hath any seen me mourn him?—If not guilt,

It is a task well worth your eloquence

To give 't an honest mien.

GAGE.

Eternal power!

Rend off the veil from this strange heart, and shew

Its natural colour.

JULIA.

Will you answer me?

I sent for other aid. Alack, none came.

Who would hold counsel with a parricide?

Will *you* take up my cause? I pr'ythee, speak!

GAGE.

I will defend thee—but . . . O woman!—woman!

If thou hast done this, thou hast slandered Heaven—

Lied to the hand that framed and sent thee forth,

A bright ambassador, to teach mankind

Truth's grace and loveliness! . . . Henceforth, oh, world!
Change thy belief: the glass is cracked—untrue,—
Let pale suspicion hold the sense in thrall—
Smiles sting—tears threaten—and fair faces sound
Alarms to justice!—Couch with beasts, that wear
Their horrid nature plain—but on that smooth,
Gentle hyena—thy own fellow man,
Hold watch untiring. Through whate'er is left
Our souls, of Eden, poisons lurk i' the flower—
The sweetest—ay, the tenderest! (*He turns away.*)

JULIA.

Your reply?

I yet may live to prove — But be resolved,
And quickly. I am called.

GAGE (*eagerly*).

Resolved!—resolved!—

Guilty or not, strange being, I am thine—
Heart, soul, and brain!—Oh, yet be merciful!—
Hear me.—Thou shalt!—

(*Throws himself madly at her feet.*)

Look—by this constant earth—

The air that clothes it—and the heaven that guides—
By every passion sown in human hearts—
Mine own unheeded love—by these—these tears—
(Stronger than their rough prison)—lastly, by
Thine own o'erladen or most wronged soul—
By word, or glance, or gesture—answer me,—
Art thou not innocent?

[JULIA stamps slightly. Several persons enter and surround her.]

JULIA.

You see And so,
Farewell. For ever? or but till the hour
Of trial? Speak. I may expect you?

GAGE (*hides his face*).*Aye.**[Exit JULIA, guarded. He sinks into his chair.]*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN TRAFFORD'S HOUSE.

Enter FAIRFAX, with INFELICE disguised.

FAIRFAX.

What canst thou do, boy?

INFELICE (*faintly*).

Eat, sir.

FAIRFAX.

'Faith, thou hast

A hungry look. What else?

INFELICE.

Drink — if I might —

Sleep — if I could — but if I can't — why watch.

FAIRFAX.

Canst lie, too?

INFELICE.

No.

FAIRFAX.

Why, there, thou dost. How old?

INFELICE.

Eighteen, sir.

FAIRFAX.

And no falsehood yet? Tell truth
For eighteen years! Why there's no conscience, boy,
Could stand such strain. A page, too? 'Tis the first
Step of thy calling.

INFELICE.

An it please you, sir,
Under your fair tuition, I'll soon ——

FAIRFAX.

Nay.

I'll no such elder pupils. You won't serve.

INFELICE.

But I've some lighter arts, sir. I can sing,
Dance, strike the cymbal ——

FAIRFAX (*turning*).

Sing! boy. Canst thou sing?

Then serve my master. 'Faith, one strain shall more
Bestead thee, than a score of silken lies
Spun from the devil's own loom. My master's sick
For music. If thy warbling can allay
His frenzied spirit, we are thy debtors all;
For since his kinsman's murder, he doth fright
All duty from him. It was but yesterday
He struck old Paul, Sir Philip's steward, that
His silver locks wept blood; and Charles, his page,
Hath left in terror. Go, my boy, get food —
Dress, and come hither. [Exit INFELICE.]

That is fortunate;

For this, his wretched cousin's trial-morn,
Must gall his reason sorely. Would 'twere done!

[TRAFFORD enters slowly and dejectedly.]

Sir, I have done your bidding, and procured
A minstrel page.

TRAFFORD.

I met him yonder. 'Tis
A fair, well-seeming boy — There was a thought
Troubling my mind . . . Ah, Fairfax — didst thou give
To the old man my message and the purse?

FAIRFAX.

Ay, sir. He thanked you. He would take no gold—
And, for the blow, 'twas of that sort that still
Recoils, and harms the giver.

TRAFFORD.

Truly, Fairfax,
When my quick passion overcame me thus,
I saw not his grey hairs. I'm sorry that
I struck him. Go— [Exit FAIRFAX.]
I am restless, sick, and sad —
Faint at the heart, and weary in the limb —
Could bluster with a sparrow — chide the wind
That, with the music of its westering moans,
Mocks my tumultuous—(Re-enter FAIRFAX).
How, sir! I have said
I'll speak with none.

[Enter DEVERELL. FAIRFAX retires.]

DEVERELL.

But *friends*. (TRAFFORD turns away.) O, save you, sir!
Your scorn is out of season. I have tamed
Many such crested snakes, that, fangless now,
Feed at my hand. You owe me, as I think,
Some seven thousand—(Looks at tablets)

TRAFFORD (*impatiently*).

Know at once, old man,
I cannot pay thee.

DEVERELL.

Nay, most honoured sir,
Who talked of payment? Thomas Deverell
Feels for his friends. He's not a post—a stone—
And seeks no further than to 'scape the loss
His trustful nature, and too-ready hand,
Would daily thrust upon him.

TRAFFORD (*aside*).

Could my soul
One moment cast its burden, I might win
Much humour from this knave. Speak, master Deverell—
Shew me your drift. You knew my hopes—and how
This most—unhappy—

DEVERELL.

Murder! Ay, I know
What's said—and I suspect that—You look pale!

TRAFFORD.

Proceed, man, and ne'er heed my looks. (*Sits down.*)

DEVERELL.

'Tis plain
She's guilty; and, as lucky fortune wills—
Old black-browed Gisborne sits in judgment—he
Whose life his own child sought. He'll not be found
Too hard of faith! What slender proof so'er,
He'll hang her, for ensample. But the law
Is complex and unsure—and those wise brains
Who lend, for wage, the talents Heaven assigned,

In aid of its worst foes, might haply light
Upon some nook of refuge. Now, admire
My prudence, sir. I have seen these gentlemen ;—
Some I have bought ; persuaded some ; of some,
Deep in my debt, made sure ; and so 'twill fall
That no lip opens on the accused side—
No witness called to palliate ; nor quaint rule
Be twisted to her safety . . . What remains ?—
The murderess once disposed—her forfeit wealth
Due to the crown, shall, on petition, fall
To you, her kinsman. Is this—Ha ! how now !
Fall'n senseless ! . . . Ho !

[*Enter FAIRFAX and INFELICE.*

Look to your lord . . . Poor fool! (*Aside—Exit.*)

TRAFFORD (*recovering*).

Then he is gone—nay, leave me.—All is well.
I will o'ercome this weakness.

FAIRFAX.

Sir, the court
Send to require your presence.

TRAFFORD (*to INFELICE*).

Alan,—haste

To master Pembroke. Bid him follow me
Unto the court—of—Ah ! he knows. Away. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—THE STREET.—EXTERIOR OF THE COURT HALL.

Many persons assembled, and passing in and out.

Enter PEMBROKE and INFELICE.

PEMBROKE.

This note, boy, to your master. In, at once.
Stay. Those dark eyes of thine have doubtless served
Their owner, at less hopeful need than that
Which now requires them. Let them wander. Note,
Chiefly, the prisoner—looks she red or pale—
Stands she—or sits—who's speaking—if the judge,
The elder of them—he with sluggish brows—
Fingers his robe, *thus*. Then, to me again;
Here will I stand—beside this pillar.—Fly.

[*Exit INFELICE.*

Myself I dare not trust. Here's one comes forth—

(*Enter a Clerk.*)

A coarse, dull-featured knave. Doubtless, with *him*,
Fair looks are treason. To be beautiful——
How goes the day, sir?

CLERK (*roughly*).

Well.

[*Exit, and enter another.*

PEMBROKE.

Nay, then, 'tis lost.

Here comes another. Psha! a mild, fair boy—
Half weeping, doubtless—smitten deep with guilt

That's housed so witchingly. I'll try him, though—
How goes the day, sir?

SECOND CLERK (*with a conceited air*).

Very gloomily

For justice — well for those, sir, who confess
Light consciences — and therewithal some skill
In poisons ; with, perhaps, a wife who hath
Outgrown their liking — inconvenient sire —
Or tough, immortal grandame — sir — . . .

[*Bows and exit.*

PEMBROKE.

'Tis plain,

I am no judge of feature — (*Approaches closer.*)

Still as death!

What beating hearts anticipate the birth
Of fate, that pregnant pause may furnish! — Ah!

[*A sudden and loud murmur heard within —
then enter two Advocates.*

FIRST ADVOCATE.

Well spoke, i' faith! But 'twas a bitter zeal
That o'erstepped nature. Ne'er was truth so mauled —
So daubed with fancies hypothetical,
And thrust in reason's room!

SECOND ADVOCATE.

But 'twill not serve.

By the red twinkle of old Gisborne's eye,

'Twill never serve.

[*Exeunt. Enter another.*

PEMBROKE (*meeting him*).

Whither so fast, my friend?

THIRD ADVOCATE.

To burn my books, sir, sell my gown, and give
My tongue a lasting holyday. No hope
For plain, dull plodders more. Gage has cut through
The fruit of eloquence — sucked the honeyed core,
And left no sweets for other. He hath forced
Belief from weak hearts — from the stronger, tears,
Which dropped — *I heard them* — on the yellow scrolls
Spread out in seeming eagerness. He spoke
To nerves of steel — else were yon fair wretch free —
Half England at her footstool. *[Exit hastily.]*

PEMBROKE.

Ha ! *[GAGE staggers out. They surround him.]*

ALL.

Huzza !

Room here for master Gage ! the poor man's friend —
The honest advocate ! Huzza ! huzza !

GAGE (*struggling through them*).

Off ! — I breathe fire ! —

A CLERK (*follows him eagerly with scrolls*).

An hundred crowns, sir,— hold —
Plead but this cause to-morrow. We have long
Beheld your rising — No ? Then, fifty more —
Talent must win. Two hundred, sir, for this —
And every future——

GAGE (*distractedly*).

Lost ! lost ! lost !

[Rushes out.]

CLERK.

O ! — *mad.* (*Returns.*)

PEMBROKE (*to INFELICE who enters*).

Come on, my boy — Away! Let's after him.

[*Exeunt. Crowd disperse.*]

SCENE III.—THE COURT.

Judges and officials seated. JULIA stands before them, guarded. TRAFFORD as accuser, with Advocates, &c. The Court, crowded with persons of both sexes, is dimly lighted, and the whole wears a dismal aspect.

CRIER OF THE COURT.

Let all keep silence. Julia Lancaster,
Thou art convict of blood and parricide.
Wherefore should'st thou not die?

FIRST JUDGE.

No answer, woman?

You wear a bold front, too — but that's the trick
Of guilt, to hide its natural feature. Well,
Canst tell us nothing? With what hellish drug,—
What strange preparative, didst put to sleep
The watchful hounds of conscience, ere thy soul
Could leap their guard, and to its evil work
Creep, thief-like? Wretch!— why didst thou this? Why
 slay
The grey-haired soldier, from whose honoured life
Grew thine?

SECOND JUDGE.

If, maiden, thou canst aught produce
In contradiction of thy threatened doom,
Our duty bids us hear it.

JULIA.

Good, my lords,
I have been schooled in sorrow—crushed in soul—
Walked in the gloomy paths where no sweet ray
Assures the wanderer's step, but that which burns
In his own breast. And I have learned to rule
Those mental furies—passion, hate, and fear—
To see nought strange in any giddy height
That guilt may reach at—nothing beautiful
In innocence assumed,—or worthy blame
In that too-eager justice which o'erleaps
The crouching guilt, and hunts the innocent
For that it seems to fly.... For this—this crime—
Stood it alone, that breath ye now require
Should render up to heaven as white a soul
As ever fled its crumbling wall of clay—
I am not guilty, sirs, of this dear blood :
But that is nothing. By this hand I raise
Up toward the source of truth, I do adjure
The doer of this dark and monstrous deed,
Shortly to meet me, and to answer, there,
The stain of double murder. I have done.

TRAFFORD (*rising eagerly*).

Sirs, I beseech you, spare her. Let her live—
If there be doubt.—Nature herself declares
This crime impossible—but nature's law
Redeems not life. If mercy—

MANY VOICES.

Mercy! mercy! . . .

FIRST JUDGE (*rising*).

Silence that howling! Master Trafford, hold!
You do mistake your office, lending breath
To their besotted cry! Above thy head
The murdered victim shakes his grizzled hair,
Moaning for vengeance! . . . Shall our cups be baned?
Harm dogs unpolicied mercy. Life for life!
The sword, struck sidelong from the well-condemned,
Stabs twenty guiltless. Woman, raise thy head:
Look. As those cressets flicker and grow wan,
So ebbs thy life.

SECOND JUDGE (*hastily*).

'Tis true. But, maiden, hear.
I would adjure thee, in a milder sort,
To penitence and peace. All thoughts that teem
With life and hopeful energy, call home,
Destroy, and crush them earthward. O, that He
Who gave thine eye such glory—shed this garb
Of natural beauty round thine outward frame,
Had passed His Spirit o'er thine own—and left
The floods of earthly passion quenched and barred!
Then—But I tax not thine o'erladen hours
With grief for things undone,—so counsel thee,
Amend this poor, faint gasp—this dwindled shred—
Concluding—you must die.

FIRST JUDGE.

And, since 'tis meet .
That, in the scraping this unnatural blot

From God's disfigured earth, there should be shewn
Some due abhorrence—though the rope be shameful,
And the axe keen, we will contrive that with
That fiery purge which——

SECOND JUDGE.

Brother, by your leave,
The power to vary the accustomed mode
Of execution rests not ——

FIRST JUDGE.

With the king
It rests,—and, by this ermine which I wear,
I will so speak, as to make void all stay
Urged by his gracious nature.

JULIA.

I am young.
How long, my lords, may be accorded me,
To urge life's feelings, memories, hopes, and fears,
To this untimely harvest—pluck their roots—
And cast them, in one fair and living heap,
Into my gaping grave? How long?

SECOND JUDGE.

Three days.
Which, by petition on the accuser's part,
May somewhat be enlarged.

FIRST JUDGE.

Not at my will.
Threedays, thou murderess!—aye, thou witch—*threedays*.
Therefore, prepare!

JULIA.

I will, my lord—and when

I shall recount my catalogue of sin—
Murder and witchcraft—as my chiefest crimes—
Shall first be thought of.

[*As the Judges rise, GAGE rushes
in eagerly.*

FIRST JUDGE (*turning from him*).

Drag her to the cell!
Proclaim the court dissolved.

GAGE.

Not so, my lords.
I have that to urge ——

FIRST JUDGE.

You are too tardy, sir.
Not even your fiery eloquence can stay
The course of justice longer.

GAGE.

Keep your scorn
Till you have heard me. Witness I have none :
But in those ancient volumes by whose rule
Our fathers meted justice, it is writ,
That if a prisoner, howsoe'er accused,
(The act not seen), shall by a champion's sword
Engage—and, ere the first star shines, prevail—
He shall be free. No scroll less merciful
Hath yet repealed this gracious mean, whereby
The all-seeing power of Heaven did oft confound
Our warped and stricken judgment. On the part
Of Julia Lancaster, I here demand
The wage of battle!

(*A pause.*)

FIRST JUDGE.

Rather might I blot

One twelvemonth from this waning calendar,
Than stretch a life so forfeit! But the law
Cannot be curbed, nor lightly bent aside,
Even to good ends. 'Tis granted. Master Trafford,
Throw down your gauntlet. Do you pause, sir? How!
You are the challenger. (TRAFFORD *drops his glove.*)
There lies his gage.
And with his body in a listed field,
Will he defend our sentence.

GAGE.

It is well.

FIRST JUDGE.

Where is your champion, woman? Here, methinks,
Not all those pretty witcheries, that made
My worthiest brother grieve, shall much avail
To your behoof. . . . There's but a single step
From field to scaffold —

JULIA.

Aye—if Heaven so wills.

FIRST JUDGE.

Peace—thou profane one!—Should the appellant yield,
He dies before thee.

GAGE.

Aye—

FIRST JUDGE (*to JULIA*).

Can I not shake
Thy stubborn spirit? Lead her to the cell—
Darkness and solitude must shroud the path
That ends in torture. [*Exeunt Judges and others.*]

GAGE (*approaching* JULIA).

So much good, dear lady,
Glean from these savage taunts, to fortify
Your heart against worst fortune. Go not forth
To meet despair—nor, when it comes, avoid—
Yet, *hope*—Heaven quits not thus the innocent—
A champion will be found. [*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A LARGE GLOOMY APARTMENT IN THE HOUSE
OF THE LANCASTERS. OLD PICTURES HANG ROUND.

TRAFFORD *at a table writing.*

TRAFFORD (*starting*).

Again—thou boding voice! Will no thought drown,—
No reason stifle thee? Have I not said
She shall not perish? Can the eyesight weep
Red, visible blood—that wheresoe'er I turn,
A drop lies weltering? . . . Dim shapes flit by—
Old men, with halting gait and grizzled hair—
While from the walls an hundred grim old sires
Grin hate like mocking demons. O my soul!
Fear'st thou to wear thy dearly purchased crown?
Cup of my life—art thickening to the dregs,
And giv'st no sweetness for't? . . . I cannot bear
This shrieking silence. . . Alan!—Alan! Boy,

[*Enter INFELICE.*

Come hither. In this tedious march of life,
The few steps thou hast walked with me have wrought
A pathway through my heart. I say, my boy,

I do believe none, none in all this world,
Saving thyself, doth love me. 'Tis most strange
How like thou art to — there! — 'tis gone again —
Form, air, and voice and feature ——— Sure if those
We love — (INFELICE *laughs.*)
Why smilest thou ?

INFELICE.

Pardon me. To think
Of the fantastic forms love takes.

TRAFFORD (*thoughtfully*).

'Twas much
To say I loved her then. But there's a thing
That bears so much love's semblance, that 'tis hard
To name it lowlier. The difference is,
It lacks the undying soul. It is a fire
That may be quenched, re-kindled, drowned again,
Yet hold a glimmering vitality,
Obedient to the hour : but love — that curse,
That serpent, fostered in man's heart to turn
Its little good to ill — can know no change —
No, not an hour's death.

INFELICE.

Do you yet repent
Your rage with Infelice? Would you ———

TRAFFORD.

Boy,
I never knew repentance.

INFELICE (*aside bitterly*).

'Tis to learn.

TRAFFORD.

What say'st thou? . . . Alan, I did bid thee once,—
Or 'twas my purpose — question of her fate.
What didst thou hear?

INFELICE.

Sir — she is dead.

TRAFFORD.

Dead!

INFELICE.

Aye.

She, that did so adore thee, lives no more.
Heart-dead, she wanders through a world that hath,
Like thee, no pity for the fool that gave
The bright pearl, honour, for the ruby, love —
And failed of both. Beware! for with such rule,
As night treads out the dead sun's track, doth hate
Spring from the sepulchre of love, that's slain
By him that was its keeper.

TRAFFORD.

Be it so.

Here's scarce enough of peace for her revenge
To flesh its tooth upon. God rest her! *Dead!*
I trust she is — The stamp of horse! — Look out!
Beneath the window — Fly, boy! Wilt thou let
Good news stand shivering at the door, and leave
Its welcome, to cold lips of— [Exit INFELICE.
Now — oh! *Now* —
Pardon — reprieve — or God!

[*Sinks into his chair.*]

Come — Alan! — What,
To hear a laugh — a happy cry! a leap!
A bounding step i' the stair — O crawler! Gone
An hour! [Re-enter INFELICE.
Thou hast it on thy cheek — Shriek, owl.
Is — is it —

INFELICE.

Death.

TRAFFORD.

Why there's a black page turned —
Leave me — To bed! — Sleep, if thou canst — No, stay
Without, awhile. These news have troubled me
Even past belief. My prayer refused — though backed
With untold wealth — Not gone?

INFELICE.

So please you, sir,
You have guests to supper, bade to celebrate
The pardon, you ——

TRAFFORD.

Why, let them come. But — stay —
The little flask thou know'st of — let it stand
Beside me, at the board. I warned thee once,
Did I not, Alan, what a dangerous gem
Gleams in that crystal casket? 'Faith, of late
It likes me to consort with things of death;
I love to raise that flask before the sun,
And think, that every crimson mote that skips
And glitters there, can drag down to the grave
A giant's life . . . It is a dreary thought,

And should not be indulged. Thou'lt do this?

[INFELICE *smiles*.

How?

My mission pleases thee?

INFELICE.

It ever does

To serve my gentle lord,

[*Exit* INFELICE.

TRAFFORD (*starting*).

Again—wild knell?

Life, be less dark—or death less terrible.

[*Exit*.

SCENE II.—A PRISON.

JULIA *lies asleep upon a rude couch*. GAGE *stands beside her—his arms folded*.

GAGE.

She stirs not—hardly breathes If flattering tongues
Have purchased this brief rest—these latest friends
Will prove thy falsest. What new-plumed hopes—
What lively visions, glittering images,
All fresh and beauteous with reviving life—
Must fade anew, when I, whose hope thou wert—
I, to whose peace thou gav'st the vital beam—
Yes—I—shall bare this death-discoloured heart,

And tell thee — But a moment — I am loth
To snatch away the robe of this sweet calm —
Since deep, indeed, must be the rest that next
Shall marry those dear lids. If *guilt* be here,
Then conscience, sick of torture, drops the whip,
And dozes o'er the wheel — if *innocence*,
Would thou wast dead before me! [Clock heard.
To my task!

Wake — madam. [Kneels, and kisses her hand.

JULIA (*awaking, and starting up*).

Is it time?

GAGE.

Dear lady, yes,
For prayer. Address you to that Power above,
Who with such placid slumber sanctifies
And soothes the tedious end . . . Shall I speak on?
I know you do not fear.

JULIA.

I'll say for thee.
Men hold my cause dishonour. I must die.

GAGE.

'Tis even so. Death robes himself in peace,
And, dartless, comes to lead you by the hand,
Beyond the shafts of ill. Your sleep was calm —
And I was jealous, lest that busy life
Should too much cumber it.

JULIA.

Thoughtful and kind —
I did not hope — I do not fear — and, least,
With thee.

GAGE.

I thank you, madam. My reward
Is—to demand no gratitude.

JULIA.

Your speech
Is colder than the heart whose generous zeal
Might give it colour. Sir, I hoped that grief
Had exercised its better part and power—
To heal dissension. You have suffered, too.
We are at peace?

GAGE (*agitated*).

At peace!

JULIA.

Yes. For the wrong
My haughty spirit——

GAGE (*eagerly*).

Dearest lady—hold—
For what is done, think it a written tale,
Heard, and forgotten—or remembered for
Some moral, harsh but true. Your scorn was just—
The sole fault, mine—and for the punishment—
Enough. 'Twas borne.

JULIA.

You had that stay so oft
Enjoined to me, your pupil. You could *hope*.

GAGE.

I had no hope. Nay, that is false—for all
Is possible, to life—and love is life—
Perfect, indissoluble, constant, pure.
Together tread they this perplexed way—

If there be joy, 'tis shared ; if sorrow, still
'Tis light to bear the anguish of an hour !
They kiss the scourge together—and, together,
(This garment of corruption cast away)
Become immortal.

JULIA.

And can hope that's held
So cheaply—scorned at—as, in truth, was thine,
Be cherished still ?

GAGE.

Aye—like a corpse embalmed :
Still fair to look upon. We know that life
Can never animate the beautiful,
Unmoving, silent mass, and yet 'tis sweet
To dwell on those fair features, and believe
We trace the foot-tracks of the flitted soul
Through its deserted dwelling.

JULIA.

O, my friend,
And kindest comforter ; these dungeon-hours,
In wasting this poor frame, have schooled my soul—
Stripped from mine eye the false, delusive glare,
That led my heart astray—but left, alas !
Nought but weak words, and barren thankfulness,
Whose bare expression seems to mock and wound
Thy haughty friendship.

GAGE.

Pardon.

JULIA.

Pardon ?

GAGE.

I

Once said I loved thee, lady.

JULIA (*smiling*).

Could I pay

In such poor coin thy service, all were well.

Warmly we plead for — loudly justify,

The faults whereof our secret hearts confess,

Themselves, the parentage. O, you have taught

More than submission — truth — and fortitude ;

A dearer task than peace ; a harder far

(To hearts like mine) than death — but, being learned,

More lovely-sweet than life, though pampered high

With towering fortunes. Hence, all pride ! all fear !

All womanly reserve ! . . . Protector — friend !

I love thee!

GAGE.

Do not mock me, lady. What ! —

Is not this day ? Are not my senses clear,

Ripe, and distinctful ? Not with words so vain

Requite the humble service —

JULIA.

Be it so.

It best befits thine honour, to reject

The humbled heart, that, sought in fortune's noon,

Was gracelessly withheld. Loosed from its pride —

Self-hated — beggared — weary — wherefore call

Its last few pulses thine ?

GAGE (*in uncontrolled emotion*).

Life of my life !

Guide of my doubting footsteps! My sweet star,
That o'er the dark flood of mine anguish moved,
And told of worlds beyond! What shall I speak?
How tell thee —— Love me! — *Love!* . . . My brain grows
wild —

Now thrilling with a fierce and eager joy —
Now shivering in a blank despair. O, Heaven!
Be present at our need.

JULIA.

Nay, dearest friend —
The calm you counselled me ——

GAGE (*in a broken voice*).

That voice — so soon
To mix with angels' — Art thou . . . Blessed hand!
Thy cool touch melts my fever. Reason leaps
Back to her throne. Forgive me — I — I weep . . .
Scorn me not, Julia — they are happy tears —
Such as give life. One moment —— And this hand,
Once more upon my brow! — Now will I save —
If not — precede thee! [*Rushes out.*]

SCENE III.—PEMBROKE'S GARDEN.

Morning twilight. PEMBROKE and CYRIL.

PEMBROKE.

'Tis even as I feared. The day is come,
And no acceptance. Fame, the wide-mouthed jade,

So loudly vaunting Trafford's skill in arms,
Hath done us mortal hurt. O, never debt
Did gall so bitterly an honest heart,
As mine to Douglas Trafford, which hath glued
My rapier — here— (*Strikes his scabbard.*)

CYRIL.

What answer has arrived
From Mordaunt?

PEMBROKE.

“That his honour and his will
Held strife.” The message found him, with his band,
Upon the eve of battle.

CYRIL.

And from Seyle?

PEMBROKE.

“He is too old, and, were his years more few,
Lacks gold to furnish him. His *heart*” — ha — ha! —
“Is with the right.”

CYRIL.

Sandell—and Gosselin?

PEMBROKE.

Supped last night with the challenger. I stayed
Their purposed missives. Who comes here?

[*Enter GAGE.*

GAGE.

'Tis I, —
Friend of the innocent.

PEMBROKE.

I'll not usurp
Your title. I'll be *thine*. But how is this?

Your joyous look — proud bearing 'Faith, you shew
More of the bridegroom than the mourner.

GAGE.

'Tis,

Indeed, my wedding morn. Sweet music fills
Mine ears ; my heart seems to expand and toy,
Like some gay swimmer through a fairy sea —
And feelings, rich as gold, that ne'er believed
They had a being, start in legions forth,
Unveiling worlds of beauty. All will, sure,
Go well ; and, be't in life or death — I'll hold
The augury fulfilled.

PEMBROKE (*shuddering*).

The flames ! —

GAGE (*starting*).

O, well

Reminded ! Joy makes selfish. Here, my Cyril.
This (*Gives a sheathed knife*) to the lady Julia, with best
speed.

Bid her conceal it — for a friend so true
Is scarce in fashion ; — let her not employ
Too rashly its sure aid. The point is tried —
If but a baby-finger urge it home,
No second touch is needed. (*Exit CYRIL.*) Now, my
friend —

Farewell ! — and if from this day's promised gloom
Spring joy, thy heart, I know, will not be last
To welcome it. Heaven guard the innocent now !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—THE APPROACH TO THE PLACE OF EXECUTION
—SMITHFIELD.

*The scaffold, pile, &c. behind, with guards, &c. &c.
Crowds of persons assembled, and pressing in.*

A WOMAN.

A goodly day, my gossips.

ANOTHER.

Very fair.

From Brentford ?

FIRST WOMAN.

Aye. My little Michael, here,
(Your cap, sir) begged so takingly to see
The pretty lady burned, that——Boy, don't tease
That butterfly ! Let go, sir ! It hath bones
And sinews like our own. Wilt never learn
Humanity ?—And so, ma'am, 'twas agreed
To make a merry day on't—and we go
To supper, in Eastcheap. *(They pass on.)*

A FORESTER.

Is that the man ?

*[TRAFFORD enters with PEMBROKE and
others, and stands back.]*

Beshrew him for a coward ! You ne'er see
A fellow of such frightened aspect, but
There's a black heart to match it.

So—'tis said
She has confessed.

A MAN.

ANOTHER.

No—no !

A CLERK.

And, if she did,
She lied !

[JULIA enters, in white ; her feet bare,
a crucifix in her hand—a Priest be-
side her—Guards, &c.

CONFESSOR (*speaking as they enter*).

— This holy resignation. They
Who take their fortune frankly by the hand,
If it be foul of mien, the quicklier growl
Familiar with the sterner lineaments,
And study, so, contentment. If we sift
The gem and offal fairly, 'twill be found—
You heed me not, my daughter.

JULIA.

Father, yes.

I did but—I— (*Still gazing round*).

CONFESSOR (*in a low voice*).

If there be any link
More dear than other—

JULIA.

Nothing—no—and yet
That promise—and forgotten!— But 'tis nothing—
Only I thought I had a friend. Look, father—
Stand you between my heart and that false world—

For we have nought in common now but form,
And promise of decay.

SEVERAL (*pressing round*).

Madam—sweet lady—
Heaven save you, madam . . . help you—give you strength,
And shame your base accusers!

CONFESSOR.

Hush, my children,
Plead for her soul.

JULIA.

I pray you, do so, friends:
For this poor body, it is hurt past cure.
Nor can the ill wherewith I languish now
Acknowledge one new pang. Hear my last words.
There is more pain in serpent-slander's tongue
Than any mortal death. . . . Within this hand,
(She takes the Confessor's hand.)

As in a sacred casket, have I lodged
That dear bequest—mine honour. Heaven shall aid
To whiten my stained name. Blessing and health,—
I mean the heart's health, friends,—wait on ye all
'Till next we greet each other. Some poor gift,
In thought of other days, more fair, perchance,
Than these have been, I'd fain bestow on ye:
But they have ta'en all from me, save this robe,
And my poor waning life I come, good father—
So heartily I do beseech your prayers—
I have begun to die. *[Procession passes on.]*

PEMBROKE (*to TRAFFORD*).

What would you, man?
Why did you catch mine arm?

TRAFFORD (*hoarsely*).

The world goes on !
The sun above us — the green earth below —
The living, leaping waves — the multitude
Of human atoms, dancing up and down ;
All keep their wonted office — and no howl,
Nor strange eclipse — nor earth-engendered flame,
Striking the vain, presumptuous souls of men —
Consorts with what we look on.

PEMBROKE.

Guilt should die.

TRAFFORD.

It should so ; aye — and blench and quake — not wear
This martyrish visage. It should not outface
Even death. I cannot look upon 't. I'll turn
Mine eyes . . . She was my playmate—Speak—'tis o'er ?

JULIA (*pauses suddenly*).

I have forgotten something. Father, hold !
And you, gentle my executioners,
Temper your zeal with patience. I must speak
One moment with my kinsman.

CONFESSOR (*interposing*).

Dearest daughter ——

JULIA.

Father, refuse me — and your holy work
May lack fruition. Drag me not to death,
Which I reject not, so my soul be freed
From earthly cumberings which afflict and stay
Its passion.

TRAFFORD (*shrinking away as she advances*).

Back, sirs ! — I withdraw ——

PEMBROKE.

You cannot.

What !— are you mad ?

TRAFFORD (*attempting to pass*).

The air — the throng — the weight
Of arms ———

PEMBROKE (*detaining him*).

She comes, man. — See, she comes !

TRAFFORD (*madly*).

Stand off !

Restrain your prisoner !—I'll not hear her !—What !—
Hold speech with one condemned ?

JULIA.

Aye — but alone.

(*Approaches nearer.*) Speak, Douglas — have I kept my
vow ?

TRAFFORD (*trembling and pale*).

'Tis kept.

JULIA.

Why, so far — well. But, cousin, I believe
Your fancy never limned these terrors forth :
Ne'er dreamed what shameful rings should circle me—
What fiery tongues should lap my bounding blood —
And stamp upon my thrice-accursèd name
The brand of such a deed. O, thy revenge
Stopped short of this — and you, perhaps, but sought
To prove my woman's faith. If this be so,
Take off that fatal pledge — unchain my tongue —
Give back my life and honour. Every breath
Is thine, that's so bestowed. My wealth regained,
I will endow a holy monastery,

Whence, day by day, shall priestly voices rise
To win sweet mercy to thy perilled soul —
Speak, Douglas!—

TRAFFORD (*stammering*).

The — the vow! — To innocence
Death has no pang.

JULIA.

And, to the guilty, life
No joy. Farewell!

TRAFFORD (*eagerly*).

O — pardon —

JULIA.

Seek it *there*.

[*Exit* TRAFFORD.

I stay the pageant. Well, sirs: I have said.

[*A distant shout as the scene closes.*

SCENE V.—TRAFFORD'S HOUSE.

He rushes in distractedly.

TRAFFORD.

Mercy! oh, horror! Cease — pursue me not,
Blood-seeking phantom! What is done, is done —
I cannot save thee — nor my own lost soul

From thy denouncement — O, be merciful!
Gracious thou wert in life — and in thy truth
Most womanly! . . . 'Twas nought! I speak to air —
These childish wailings must be stilled. O heart,
Watch and be bold — for I am sure our fears
Take hideous forms to torture us. A step! —
Who comes? *[Enter INFELICE hastily.]*

INFELICE.

'Tis I, sir. You must to the field —
Fair sport awaits you.

TRAFFORD.

Sport!

INFELICE.

To such an arm,
No more. But haste! and while you gather on
[Assists to arm him.]

These sparkling aids to conquest — know, sir, how
At the last moment — as the white, bare feet
Of the lost maiden pressed the fatal pile,
As though the earth had travailed with the load
Of sin laid on her bosom, there leaped forth
A gallant champion.

TRAFFORD.

Know'st him?

INFELICE.

Aye — 'twas Gage.

TRAFFORD.

Why, boy, the very glitter of my steel
Must end that quarrel. Seeks he death from *me*?

INFELICE.

At least 'twill be an honest end You'll drink
Ere you go forth? *[Brings cups.]*

TRAFFORD.

I need it not. O Heaven!
My brain! . . . Nay, if thou wilt, I'll taste. My cup
Tastes sweetest from thy hand — *[Drinks deeply.]*
'Tis cheering — How? — *[INFELICE drops the goblet.]*
Art sick, boy?

INFELICE.

With a sudden fancy, sir.
If your abandoned — Infelice — ha!
Could she behold your triumph —

TRAFFORD.

Let her die!
And memory perish with her!

INFELICE.

As you say.
Die truth! die constancy! Love! love's a thing
To curse — to trample — to forget. — Away!
[Exeunt hastily.]

SCENE VI.—SMITHFIELD, AS BEFORE.

With lists prepared. Judge of the field, Marshals, &c.

*JULIA and Guards — PEMBROKE — GAGE armed —
and CYRIL.*

JUDGE.

Comes he not yet?

OFFICER (*looking forth*).

Not yet, my lord. He takes

The summons coldly.

GAGE (*crosses to JULIA*).

Look around you, love.

In that strange human ocean — now so still —

What storm and tempest lower! What biting rock —

And hollow, smiling vortex, fill with snares

The pilgrim's way — that ne'er may peril more

Our happy, homeward barks.

JULIA (*in a low voice*).

My heart is broken.

O, Francis! while my sorrows were my own,

I bore them; — now that thou hast made them thine,

I faint and fail . . . O God! the foe! I feel

His step upon my heart —

[*Enter TRAFFORD and INFELICE.*

MARSHAL.

Would you speak aught

Ere we give signal?

TRAFFORD (*averting his head from JULIA*).

No. Your part at once,
And end this mockery.

MARSHAL (*in a loud voice*).

Take your places! — On!

And God defend the right! [Trumpet. *They engage.*

TRAFFORD (*pausing*).

You are wounded.

GAGE.

Psha!

Not felt. Come on, sir.

TRAFFORD.

Blood is victory.

(*To the Marshal.*) May this conclude?

MARSHAL.

The fight is à l'outrance.

One must submit.

GAGE.

I do not. To your guard! [They fight again.

PEMBROKE.

His strokes grow feebler—yet he shews no hurt—

What ails your master, boy?

INFELICE.

Sir, there are harms

Not of the sword. Some hearts may be assailed

More easily within; and, we have seen

Unwholesome drinks may strike——

PEMBROKE (*turning*).

What do you mean? (*Shout.*)

Ha! — look — 'tis over!

[TRAFFORD *throws up his arms, and falls.*

TRAFFORD.

I am slain — but not
By thee. 'Tis poison — I am dying — oh! —

GAGE (*standing over him*).

Confess, unhappy man.

MARSHAL (*interposing*).

His life is yours.
But if his guilt be —

GAGE (*fiercely*).

Back! — Confess — confess!

TRAFFORD (*raising himself*).Why, listen, then. *I murdered Lancaster!*[*Exit* PEMBROKE.]

And, for my safety, would have strangled *her* —
But for that oath which — wretched fool! — she kept
Ev'n to the grasp of death O me! — these pangs
Would search and rend the dearest secret forth
E'er locked in mortal bosom! Ha! a light
Shoots o'er me Look! — yon page, that shrinks and
cowers —

O — haste ye drag him — I must speak — one
word —

And to his ear alone — (*INFELICE is brought near.*)

My faithful page,

I have a doubt. Resolve me.

[*INFELICE stoops. He snatches her dagger, and stabs her.*

Know from this —

My Infelice! — dying men see clear. [*He dies.*GAGE (*sinks at JULIA'S feet*).

Spotless and saved! My task is nearly done —

One word, and then, good night — 'Tis coming — Hark !

[*Shouts within* — “ Pardon ! Pardon ! ”

PEMBROKE (*rushing in with a parchment*).

Pardoned and free !

[*Guards withdraw*.

GAGE (*leans forward*).

O ! happy !

PEMBROKE.

All our hearts

Rejoice with thee, sweet lady. May your years

Be happy in the land.

JULIA (*her eyes still fixed on GAGE*).

I thank you. But

Here's one should not be silent 'midst the joy

Himself hath wrought. See you not these good friends

That crowd to hail your victory ? Up, and hear

Your grateful ——

CYRIL.

Lady, he has fainted — Hark !

What sound ? — 'Tis trickling blood — and he is ——

JULIA (*fiercely*).

Peace !

Who saw him stricken ? You are mad. This blood

Is nought — though it hath made him pale. He faints

From this unwonted toil — But he will speak,

And soon Look, how he grasps me by the hand !

Aye — *close* — for 'tis thine own I pray you all,

Stand back awhile Dear Francis — gallant friend —

True lover — true alike in sun and shade —

Thou rest'st on Julia's bosom — Francis — I —

I tremble at thee Speak — nay, *once* again !

Dost dream? Art happy? Lov'st thou me?

Alas —

Still mute! There looks no spirit from thine eyes,
Though they dwell on me still — In this great palace,
The noble tenant slumbers Cold — ah! — cold —
This life-bestowing hand Nay, I will look
No more upon the world. Here — here is mine —
All's chaos else — all darkness, cloud, and gloom,
And death — [Kneels down beside him.]

CYRIL (*approaching gently*).

O, comfort, lady; there's a bliss
Beyond thy dear affection.

JULIA (*turns to him*).

Cyril Brother! (*Bursts into tears*.)

[Curtain falls.]

THE END.

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